

THE MISSION AT WASHINGTON, D. C.

Report to National Conference, Winona Lake, Ind., 1900, by W. M. Lyon.

Thru the tender mercies and loving kindness of Our Father in Heaven, we have been permitted to spend another year in His service in the Capital City, and we can not express in words our thankfulness at this time for the privilege of attending another National Conference with its helpful associations and fellowship. And now we are called upon to tell something concerning the work with which we have been entrusted. But before undertaking to do this, I wish to say that I fear that much of this report will not prove so very interesting from the fact that we have used most freely the columns of the EVANGELIST during the entire year, and yet for us now to review the work as a whole may not be altogether without profit.

First I would speak of the blessings that have resulted from the purchasing and possession of a church property. We were impressed at the time, and our convictions in that direction grow stronger as the days go by, that this church home in the Nation's Capital came to us in answer to prayer, as a special Providence, according to the working of Him who taketh pleasure in giving to his own even "*exceeding abundantly above*" all that they can ask or think.

It is not necessary that I should speak of the great advantage that has come to the work on account of the acquirement of this house of worship; this advantage is apparent to all, and yet perhaps none can appreciate the greatness of the blessing as those who represented the little band in that city, who had waited so long and patiently. But before proceeding further I wish to give honor to whom honor is due by speaking of the still greater blessing that came to us because of the magnanimous impulse that prompted the hearts of our dear brethren and sisters thru-out the brotherhood when the opportunity was presented which caused them to respond so heartily, and as I said then so I repeat now: "It is the biggest sermon that could possibly be preached in the City of Washington in favor of the doctrine as sustained and advocated by the Brethren Church."

Many people have again and again been led to say, (and not a few of these people claim to be among the "elect" number,) they have been led to say thru some kind of a spirit that the "Brethren Church is dead;" we have often heard even worse than that said about us, but when that call went out a few months ago and when within a few weeks afterward over \$3000 dollars had rolled into the treasurer's hands, I tell you, brethren, it looked like the church was not quite dead yet, and if it *was* dead and could make such a record as that, what can we expect to do when once alive?

Yes my beloved brethren, when that stream of money came flowing in, which made it possible for us to set up our Lord's banner in our own Church-home in the representative city of our nation, it filled every heart

with a confidence and inspiration that could scarcely have proceeded from any other source; it told the people of Washington City, (and it is still telling them) of lives that have been refreshed by the crystal waters that flow from the eternal throne; it told of hearts that were beating in unison with the heart of the great Life Giver; it told something of that same love that our Master had without which we would have no right to take to ourselves the name of "*Brethren*."

But let us pass this now to notice other evidences of the divine approval, by reference to our report of the work to the National Conference one year ago, we find that our membership at that time was only 25, during the year ending August 17, 1900, we have received 36 into church fellowship, 24 by baptism, 7 by letter and 5 by relation, 31 of these having been received since the beginning of the New Year.

Perhaps we could not point to any stronger evidence of the Lord's presence with us than the fact that these accessions to the church have come, not as the result of any special effort, but in the regular way, no special or protracted services having been held at any time during the year. We praise God that he has so signally manifested his presence in the congregation at Washington in the continuation of the spirit of harmony, union, love, and peace. Where this spirit prevails and abounds *revivals can not be held—they hold themselves—we cannot hold them back.*

Next we desire to notice what the record shows from a financial point of view, but before doing this I would call attention to the fact that we have no wealthy members; all are comparatively poor, and but few get more than a moderate salary.

During the year ending August 17, 1900, I find that the offerings and contributions of the congregation have amounted to \$300.16; the Sunday school offerings, \$43.34; the Missionary Society has raised \$25.65; besides this over \$400 was subscribed to be paid on the church property April 1, all of which, with the exception of a few dollars, was paid promptly at that time, so that from a financial point of view, we feel that we have reason to be encouraged having raised during the year, counting in some incidentals not necessary to name here, nearly \$800, which is more than four times the amount raised by the congregation last year. In other words, we have increased financially at the rate of more than 400 per cent, and numerally at the rate of nearly 150 per cent.

At the same rate of increase during the year to come, we shall not only become self-supporting but able to render assistance to others. Of course it will be understood that this does not apply to the payment of the debt still due on account of the church property but we have confidence in the dear brethren and sisters who have helped thus far and we believe they will continue to help until the entire indebtedness shall be cancelled.

I do not feel that it is necessary to say much more. The statistics and information

already given are sufficient perhaps to set forth the real condition of the work, and yet it may not be out of place to call attention to some other things.

We have a Sunday school with an enrollment of 83, altho the average attendance during the summer has not been large. We have a fine, large library case with a nice selection of books to begin with. We have a Missionary Society with a membership of about 30. And within the past few days steps have been taken which have resulted in the securing of a charter, and now the First Brethren Church of Washington, D. C. stands as an incorporated body according to the laws of the District of Columbia, which will give to the work additional prestige and influence.

During the year my time has been given entirely to the work in the city, so that our mission points in Va., Md. and W. Va. have received no assistance whatever, but we are glad to say that notwithstanding this, the scattered members at those different points, at least most of them, continue faithful to their vows, and we trust before the expiration of another year some opportunity may be given to strengthen them both spiritually and numerally. From the beginning it has been our purpose to labor so as to make the work in Washington a great, distributing reservoir from which blessings might proceed in every direction, not only to the adjacent portions of the surrounding country but to continue to reach out farther and farther, knowing no limit excepting the ends of the earth, according to the perfect model as given by the greatest missionary ever known, even the Lord himself, who hath said "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

And now my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, and especially my brethren in the ministry,—after all, it is only as we base our actions upon this divine and eternal principle, the principle of living for others, even as Christ lived, that we can ever hope to receive the blessing of God. There is no real spiritual life nor prosperity outside of this. But in order to realize the fulfillment of this divine ideal—for such it is—I wish now to say that it is still very important, yea, *absolutely necessary* that we should still have the hearty and substantial co-operation of the brotherhood.

While we have been so richly and so wonderfully blessed in so many ways during the past year yet we have not been without our seasons of disappointments, of testings, of trials. We shall continue to have them, but the same great Deliverer is ours and through him we expect to press on with that same overcoming faith, gaining the victory in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And as we have been under the blessing of God, counted worthy to be placed in trust with this work, our only desire is that we may prove worthy of the confidence that has been placed in us.

We are conscious of the fact that what-